

# MDE Guidance on ELs with Suspected Disabilities

*Special Populations Conference  
Office of Field Services- MDE  
Sep 22- 23, 2014  
Lansing, MI*

## **Acknowledgments- the team:**

- Shereen Tabrizi, Michigan Department of Education
- Jayne Sowers, Great Lakes Comprehensive Center
- Joan deSouza, Dearborn Public Schools
- Kristina Martinez Precious, Muskegon Public Schools
- Su McKeithen-Polish, Macomb Intermediate School District
- Sara Rainwater, Genesee Intermediate School District
- Deborah Szeman & Lena Montgomery, Wayne Regional Educational Agency

# Goals of the Session

- **Discuss need and purpose of the Guidance**
- **Review major sections.**
- **Seek & gather feedback and input from participants.**
- **Share plans for roll-out and dissemination.**

# Problem statement

- Studies of the collaboration between English learner and special education personnel demonstrate lack of effective collaboration (Zehler et al., 2003a).
- Districts state significant challenges in distinguishing language acquisition difficulties and disabilities among ELs as few staff members are knowledgeable in both special education and second language acquisition (Zehler et al., 2003b).
- Michigan's Title III (English Language Acquisition) team noted that despite growth in the EL population, most districts and public school do not have policies, procedures or resources in place for sound identification and placement of ELs in special education.

## **Problem statement, Cont'd:**

Nationally, English learners are either underrepresented or overrepresented in special education programs.

One study notes examples such as, “districts with smaller EL populations (99 or fewer LEP students) identify an average 15.8% of their ELs for special education services, while districts with 100 or more ELs identify on average 9.1% of their LEP students for special education” (Zehler et al, 2003b, p. 6)  
(NASDSE)

# Purpose of Guidance

- Create an awareness of the laws, regulations, and policies related to the educational rights of English learners (ELs);
- Explain the process for acquiring a second language acquisition;
- Promote a collaborative approach among teachers, administrators, and other personnel when planning programs for ELs;
- Provide consistent guidelines for instructional interventions, special education identification process, and program options for English learners.

# Major sections of the document- 1

## Introduction.....

- Purpose of Handbook.....
- Definition of English Learners.....
- The Need: Prevalence Data and Disproportionality.....
- Federal Acts and Court Cases.....

## **Major sections of the document- 2**

### **Educator Knowledge and Skills.....**

- Factors affecting language acquisition
- Developing a Second Language (L2): BICS and CALP.....
- FAQs about 2<sup>nd</sup> Language Acquisition and Teaching Els (project on screen).....



# Major sections of the document- 3

Types of Instructional settings/models of delivery for ELs in MI-descriptions:

- *Sheltered ESL Instruction,*
- *English as a Second Language*
- *Structured English Immersion,*
- *Content-based English as a Second Language,*
- *Newcomer program,*
- *Bilingual Dual-Language Instruction,*
- *Bilingual Two-Way Immersion,*
- *Transitional bilingual Instruction,*
- *Bilingual Heritage Language Instruction.*

# **Educators knowledge & Skills-- Frequently Asked Questions**

- *Do literacy skills transfer from first to second language and how do they affect the learning of English?*
- *I have a student who is not talking yet has been in my classroom for three months. Is this okay? Is the student learning anything?*
- *If a student speaks with English fluency—that is, in sentences and is able to answer questions—why is he or she still enrolled in the EL program?*

# **Educators knowledge & Skills-- Frequently Asked Questions**

- *If a student has exited from an EL program, why does he or she still have problems with content?*
- *How can we appropriately challenge EL students in the classroom?*
- *What can I do to accurately assess an ELs understanding of what I have taught?*



## Educators knowledge & Skills--Frequently Asked Questions: Table Discussion

Discuss *what other questions* district teams would like to add to the document to inform general education and special education teachers, other personnel.

# Major Sections of the Document- 4

## Review of Existing Available Data:

- Criteria for selecting assessment instruments
- Comprehensive assessment: student background, health, social/emotional, linguistic (L1,L2), cultural differences, family history, formative assessment..
- Involving the parents

# Major Sections of the Document- 5

## The Assessment/Evaluation Process.....

- Step 1: Rule out exclusionary factors.....
- Step 2: Ensure appropriate placement, appropriate instruction, curriculum, and other Factors .....
- Step 3: Review prior information, determine and implement appropriate assessments.....
- Step 4: Discuss results and make determinations

# Major Sections of the Document-5: Assessment/Evaluation Process

- **Step 1: Rule out exclusionary factors:**
  - A visual, hearing, or motor disability
  - Emotional impairment
  - Cultural factors
  - Environmental or economic disadvantage
  - Disrupted schooling or refugee status

## **Major Sections of the Document- 5: Assessment/Evaluation Process**

- **Step 2: Ensure Appropriate Placement, Appropriate Instruction and Curriculum:**
  - Best practices for ELs (curriculum instruction)
  - Reading instruction
  - Mathematics instructions
  - Supportive environment (culturally and linguistically)
  - Appropriate and timely interventions (MTSS)



# Major Sections of the Document- 5:

## Assessment/Evaluation Process

- **Step 3: Review Prior Information and Determine and Implement Appropriate Assessments**
  - Compile background information on student: health history, educational experiences, prior schooling, home language, proficiency in LI,2.
  - Determine and Conduct Assessments: appropriate assessments, appropriate training for assessors, collaboration between EL and SE teachers, use of interpreters, use of progress monitoring tools.

# Major Sections of the Document- 5:

## Assessment/Evaluation Process

### Step 4: Discuss Results and Make Determinations

- The communication barrier may serve to diminish what is known about the student's academic skills or to hide the disability.
- When interpreting evaluation data, evaluators should be cautious and not make assumptions about bilingual students by using frameworks that were developed solely for monolingual speakers.

# Major Sections of the Document- 6

## The Individual Education Program (IEP):

- List of members of the Individualized Educational Program (IEP).
- Content of an IEP for ELs including ruling out factors discussed earlier in document.
- Frequently asked questions document (see next slides)

# Major Sections of the Document- 6

- Can students receive both EL and special education services?
- What is the process for entering and exiting the EL program?
- Should parents be encouraged to speak their native language or be advised to speak only English with their children at home?
- Does the student's back-and-forth use of the home language and English signify a problem?
- How should special education teachers, EL teachers, general education teachers, and speech and language pathologists work together as a team?

# Major Sections of the Document- 6

- Do ELs need an IEP or 504 plan to receive accommodations on tests?
- How do we know if an EL should be referred for special education services?
- Can primary grade students who are ELs or older (WIDA ELP Level 1) students be referred for special education?
- Can students who are ELs with little or no previous formal education in their home countries be referred for special education?
- If a student has moved to WIDA ELP Level 5, why might he or she have challenges understanding content language?



## **Major Sections of the Document- 6**

**What other questions would local district teams like to include in this section?**

# Major Sections of the Document- 7

- English Learner References...
- Resources (websites, organizations, books and articles)
- Appendices (**WIDA Performance levels, other?**)

# MDE's Roll-out Plan

State conferences:

- MDE-Special Populations
- MITESOL, Oct 2014
- MABE, May 2015
- AdvancEd, Spring 2015
- Webinars
- TOT with ISDs



# Seeking feedback: Table Discussion

Think..pair..share.. and complete the chart:

- What sections were useful?
- Which sections were not very useful
- What else do you wish to include?
- How would you roll it out in your district?

## **Report out ... if time permits.**

- What sections were useful?
- Which sections were not very useful
- What else do you wish to include?
- How would you roll it out in your district?

# Contact Information

For questions regarding the draft  
Guidance on ELs with Suspected Disabilities  
document, please contact:

Shereen Tabrizi, Ph.D.

Education Consultant Manager

Office of Field Services

Michigan Department of Education

[TabriziS@michigan.gov](mailto:TabriziS@michigan.gov)

Tel: 517 373-6066



Thank you!

The most important thing about assessment is that it promotes dialogue among faculty.”

*-Mary Senter*

The important question is not how assessment is defined but whether assessment information is used...

*-Palomba & Banta*